



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460  
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OFFICE OF  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Ms. M. Dolores Wesson  
Chair, U.S. National Advisory Committee  
Coastal Observing Research and Development Center  
Marine Physical Laboratory  
Scripps Institution of Oceanography  
La Jolla, CA 92093-0202

Dear Ms. Wesson:

On behalf of Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, I would like to thank you for the National Advisory Committee's (NAC) advice of November 19, 2007 reporting on its October 2007 meeting. Your advice provided valuable recommendations to the United States regarding the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and the important issues of communications, emerging trends, and the CEC Operational Plan. I was sorry that I could not join you in person, and pleased that Scott Fulton, the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of International Affairs, was able to attend.

As noted at your last meeting and in your advice, the project suggestions you provided last spring were seriously considered, and in many cases, integrated into the CEC Operational Plan. We appreciated your input and continue to benefit from your useful advice.

We appreciate your recommendations on the need for a communications strategy for the CEC. We agree that a targeted effort from the Secretariat would make CEC communications more effective. We also recognize that each Party, and the JPAC, have a role to play in this important endeavor. To that end, we will continue to look for opportunities to highlight successes when the CEC accomplishes tangible results that benefit the environment in North America. Recognizing that the CEC is operating with an especially tight budget this year, we will bring your suggestions regarding a targeted communications plan, and the refilling of the CEC Communications Officer, to the General Standing Committee for their consideration.

As for your request about passive outreach through the CEC website, my staff has inquired with the Secretariat staff, who provided some details of CEC web traffic for the last quarter, from Google Analytics (attached). In addition, the Secretariat informed us that they are planning to make some significant changes to the website, and some promotional outreach, in the first quarter of 2008.

Thank you for your good thinking and sound advice on CEC Emerging Trends. As explained at your October meeting, the Emerging Trends conference, along with the State of the



Environment report, will help us identify the most important issues to address in our 2010 Strategic Plan. The two emerging trends that you identified – nanotechnology and climate change – provide useful input as we form our views in planning for the conference. We will share this with our experts for additional feedback. We will also need to consider the potential value added by the CEC on such topics in light of their existing work and our own engagement in other international fora on such matters.

We acknowledge your concern that the CEC should not cover all environmental issues, and should focus on areas where the CEC can provide a unique contribution. While not necessarily maintaining the structure of the Puebla Pillars, our goal for the 2010 Strategic Plan will be to create a streamlined, integrated CEC with an overarching theme or themes, with several key complementary issues that take advantage of the CEC's strengths. We look forward to continuing this conversation with you as the 2010 Strategic Plan begins to take shape.

Thank you for your advice on improving the format of the CEC Operational Plan. We agree with your advice and we shared it with the Secretariat as part of our U.S. comments on the plan. Given the timing, it was too late for the Secretariat to make some of these changes, and in some cases, other Parties' positions prevailed about the best way to frame the projects. We will ask the Secretariat to take your suggestions into account as we begin plans for the Operational Plan in 2009.

Regarding your specific advice on the North American Fellowship and Visiting Scholars Program, we have consulted with the Secretariat to understand the challenges they are facing and what is being done to move forward with this project. The Secretariat currently brings three students each summer on a "short educational program" using a tourist visa. They have been exploring ways to lengthen this program, and are working to address the visa challenges of bringing students from other countries to Canada in order to work at the Secretariat.

In addition, we are open to exploring ways to exchange students from different universities and bring them to our government agencies. This activity will not present as many visa challenges, but two details that must be clarified are the role of the Secretariat (to ensure that it does not become too burdensome) and the role of the Parties in receiving students. As an initial step, the Parties have committed to share information about their existing internship and fellowship opportunities, to be posted on the CEC website. Once these opportunities are compiled, we will explore whether it is feasible to have the CEC take a bigger role in bringing students into government agencies through an exchange program.

The Secretariat is exploring ways to build relationships with specific universities and academic networks in order to build partnerships with the academic world. The Secretariat is very interested in speaking with NAC members who would like to provide advice and assistance in strengthening these relationships. We have provided the names and contact information of our academic NAC members to Mario Cuan, who is leading this effort in the Secretariat. You are also invited to contact Mario directly at 514-350-4327 or [mcuan@cec.org](mailto:mcuan@cec.org).

The U.S. agrees with your recommendations about the State of the Environment report and will take them under advisement as this effort develops. We would like to clarify that the



first draft of the NA SOE will not cover all environmental issues. Rather it will include areas that have consistent information available across Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. and are areas of common interest. These include:

- Pollutants: persistent bio-accumulative toxic substances; waste management (including industrial releases and transfers); acid deposition;
- Biodiversity and ecosystems: species of common concern (migratory, endangered species, etc); invasive species; fisheries; land use and habitat change (including protected areas and ecoregions);
- Water: water quality; water use and quantity; shared water resources; and
- Air and atmosphere: particulate matter; ground-level ozone; stratospheric ozone; climate change

The above areas focus on major themes of importance to North America, and have the following aspects in common:

- Common/shared resources;
- Shared priority issues;
- Cross-boundary environmental issues; and
- Trends affecting North American region.

The CEC and the North American countries recognize that these are not the only issues of common interest, but it is important to keep in mind that currently a lot of the environmental information and data across North America is not in a form such that it can be used in the first draft of CEC's NA SOE. It is the goal of this effort to focus future drafts on additional environmental topics as the information and data becomes more similar. The U.S. does encourage the CEC to embrace partnering with multilateral organizations and initiatives for pursuing the development of environmental indicators.

We appreciate your comments regarding the timing of factual records. As you know, we consider each submission on a case by case basis, and we are committed to responding promptly when the Secretariat provides us with determinations. We do not believe that additional rules in this matter are necessary. We do recognize that there has been a long delay on several submissions which are still pending. Unfortunately, the U.S. is not always in a position to push the process forward as quickly as we envision because of the consensual nature of the decision-making by the Council. The timeline for making Council decisions is affected by the domestic timelines of the three Parties.

Thank you for your advice regarding creating a North American identity that will be internationally recognized as an environmentally friendly region. This topic relates to the CEC's new trade and environment project on Competitiveness and Sustainability. This project aims to simultaneously enhance North American competitiveness and environmental performance. In 2008, the project will focus on understanding the link between environmental sustainability and competitiveness, and will include development of a comprehensive report on the nature and value of good environmental policy and practices, while maintaining or enhancing competitiveness in North America. We shared your advice on this matter with our trade experts, and they expressed interest in discussing this topic further with the experts on the NAC and GAC, perhaps at a future NAC and GAC meeting.

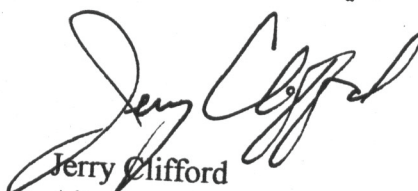
Regarding your advice on the long-term funding for the CEC, we agree in principle with your advice. Unfortunately, it is not possible to revisit this issue at this time. However, we would note that before additional funding could be pursued for the CEC, we would like to ensure that any new influx of resources would be used to make the CEC even more effective, to produce additional, tangible results for North America's environment.

Thank you for your comments supporting a competitive granting program designed to build capacity in local communities. The Council seriously discussed this possibility at the 2007 Council Session. The Council determined that grants may be given to local groups if they are well-placed to support a specific activity in the CEC Operational Plan. This will be determined on a project by project basis. The grants management process must include strong selection criteria, history of performance, and accountability.

Finally, regarding your interest in the collaboration with your sister committees in Mexico and Canada, we will be happy to share this request with the other Parties in our next GSC discussion.

As you can see, your guidance is highly valued. We look forward to discussing these projects with you in more detail, and continuing to work together to strengthen the CEC as a catalyst for cooperative action, with relevance to United States constituencies and to North America. We look forward to seeing you at your Spring meeting.

Sincerely,



Jerry Clifford  
Alternate Representative for the  
United States

cc: Jeffrey N. Wennberg, Chair, U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee  
Irene Henriques, Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee  
Members of the U.S. National Advisory Committee